

RUSSIA AND THE WEST IN IRAN

Yet, as time went on, the Democrats concentrated their propaganda on two basic demands: the right of Azerbaijan to have schools conducted in the Turkish language and to have provincial autonomy. 'Utiile the first was acceptable to the central government, the second had serious implications, especially because of the presence of Soviet troops in the province. Talks on this subject between the Democrat leaders and Governor Bayat did not help to settle the issue. By November it was evident that, failing to achieve their aims by negotiation, the Democrats were ready to take matters into their own hands. By the middle of November large quantities of arms had been distributed among the party adherents and the peasantry. It was common knowledge in Azerbaijan that the arms were supplied directly or indirectly, as circumstances dictated, by the Red Army. Following this distribution, the Democrats launched a new offensive to seize power in the province. Gendarmerie posts were attacked and disarmed, government offices in various centers were occupied by the insurgents; prominent officials, army and police officers, and some industrialists and landowners were killed. This action was carried out with the obvious connivance of Soviet military authorities, although the latter took care not to intervene openly. Soviet tactics consisted in (a) obstructing all movements of the Iranian army or gendarmerie whenever they wanted to quell the riots; (b) protecting all meetings and movements of the Democrats by posting armed Soviet detachments in their vicinity; and (c) intimidating the population by the arrest of certain government officials in scattered points under various pretexts. At the same time Soviet army commanders

pretended to maintain normal relations with Iranian civil and military authorities. The most irrefutable proof of Soviet connivance with the Democrats came when the Iranian government sent north regular troops to quell the rebellion. These troops were barred from entering the Soviet zone by the Red Army.

Simultaneously the Democratic party displayed vigorous political action. On November 23 its Central Committee issued a proclamation defining its aim as the complete autonomy of Azerbaijan. On the next day *Khavar-i-No* published a list of Iranian officials who should be liquidated. The list included the names of the Commanding General, Darakhshani, his chief of staff, and several gendarmerie